

Therefore, besides being attained by non-Buddhists, the five clairvoyances are also attained by Bodhisattvas who have reached at least the third level of the path of accumulation, i.e. the great path of accumulation.

This completes the presentation of the six clairvoyances.

Next follows the presentation of the ninth and tenth topics of the Mahayana practice instructions, the path of seeing and the path of meditation. They are explained under the following outline:

*Instructions on eradicating the seeds of the objects of abandonment*

This outline has two further outlines with the path of seeing being presented under the first outline and the path of meditation under the second:

1. *Instructions on the antidote to intellectually acquired objects of abandonment*
2. *Instructions on the antidote to innate objects of abandonment*

Tibetan: མཐོང་ལམ། *thong lam* (*thong* = to see/to perceive, *lam* = path)

Tibetan: གཏམ་ལམ། *gom lam* (*gom* = to meditate/to familiarize/meditation/familiarization, *lam* = path)

The words of the **Ornament** that describe the path of seeing and the path of meditation are:

...and what are called "the paths of seeing  
And meditation"...

Since the **Ornament** provides extensive explanations of the path of seeing and the path of meditation during some later topics, the expositions presented here are quite short. Panchen Sonam Drakpa provides merely a paragraph of explanation in his **General Meaning** without elucidating any further. Haribhadra's **Commentary Clarifying the Meaning**, Gyaltsab je's **Ornament of the Essence**, and Lama Tsongkhapa's **Golden Rosary** are also very brief in their presentations of the two topics.

## **THE PATH OF SEEING**

As mentioned above, the path of seeing is presented under the following outline:

1. *Instructions on the antidote of intellectually acquired objects abandonments*

The following paragraphs are a general explanation of the path of seeing preceded by a brief description of the path of accumulation and the path of preparation, which must both be attained before attaining the path of seeing:

One very important concept of Tibetan Buddhism is the concept of the five paths.

Here 'paths' do not actually refer to physical pathways but to non-physical states of mind that are cultivated by listening, contemplating, and meditating on the Dharma. Paths are different levels of mental attainments that gradually take practitioners to the two principal Buddhist goals, liberation and Buddhahood by removing the obstructions to these goals.

The prime objective of Hinayana practitioners is to attain the goal of liberation and therefore to eliminate afflictive obstructions. Afflictive obstructions are mental obstructions that mainly obstruct sentient beings from becoming liberated Arhats. They can be further categorized into:

- (1) *intellectually acquired* afflictive obstructions and
- (2) *innate* afflictive obstructions

The prime objective of Mahayana practitioners, on the other hand, is to attain full enlightenment and thus to eliminate afflictive *and* cognitive obstructions. Cognitive obstructions are mental obstructions that mainly obstruct sentient beings from becoming fully enlightened, omniscient Buddhas. According to the Svatantrika Madhyamika Tenet, they can also be further categorized into:

- (1) *intellectually acquired* cognitive obstructions and
- (2) *innate* cognitive obstructions

(As will be explained below, the Prasangika Madhyamika Tenet does not accept this subdivision of cognitive obstructions)

There are numerous ways of categorizing the various levels of mental attainments that are needed to reach the two goals, but in general they are described in the scriptures as being five-fold:

1. Path of accumulation
2. Path of preparation
3. Path of seeing
4. Path of meditation
5. Path of no-more-learning

Please note that the five paths must be cultivated progressively in a practitioner's mental continuum with the lower paths being generated before proceeding to the higher paths.

Even though there are five Hinayana and five Mahayana paths, since the Hinayana paths are discussed during a later topic of the **Ornament**, the paths described here are the Mahayana paths.

### **1. Mahayana path of accumulation**

The criterion for entering the Mahayana path in general and the Mahayana path of accumulation in particular, is the generation of Bodhicitta. Bodhicitta refers to the sincere and spontaneous aspiration to overcome the cognitive obstructions (the obstructions to omniscience) and become a Buddha for the benefit of all sentient beings. Such aspiration can only arise after intense and prolonged contemplation of the suffering existence of all sentient beings.

Once Mahayana practitioners, that is, Bodhisattvas have cultivated the path of accumulation they need to accumulate sufficient merit and wisdom by engaging in the practice of the six perfections, and so forth, to be able to proceed. This is the reason for calling this path the 'path of *accumulation*'.

Furthermore, Bodhisattvas need to generate an inferential cognizer realizing the emptiness of true existence. In other words, unless Bodhisattvas realized emptiness *before* they entered the Mahayana path of accumulation, they must now reflect on the various reasons that establish the ultimate nature of reality until they are able to infer the lack of true existence of phenomena and thereby newly and conceptually realize emptiness, i.e. realize the emptiness of true existence with an inferential cognizer. Additionally, Bodhisattvas must develop calm abiding, a special meditative stabilization that is able to focus uninterruptedly on an internal object with calmness, clarity, and intensity for at least four hours. Following that, calm abiding (that focuses on, for instance, the visualized image of a Buddha) and analytical meditation (i.e. a conceptual consciousness realizing emptiness) are harmonized by alternating from one to the other.

### **2. Mahayana path of preparation**

The criterion for entering the Mahayana path of preparation is when Bodhisattvas newly attain a meditative stabilization that is a *union of calm abiding and special insight*, taking emptiness as the object. The union refers to two awarenesses, calm abiding and special insight, arising simultaneously in union as concomitant mental factors, both realizing emptiness. That means that calm-abiding, the one-pointed awareness realizing emptiness, and special insight, the thorough discrimination of emptiness, now operate parallel at the same time, with equal power, one assisting the other.

However, this meditative stabilization that is a union of calm abiding and special insight is a *conceptual* consciousness, and therefore unable to act as a direct antidote to any of the obstructions.

When Bodhisattvas arise from the conceptual realization of emptiness, they engage in the accumulation of merit by practicing the six perfections, and so forth.

Since this path serves as a preparation for the path of seeing, i.e. for realizing emptiness directly, it is called 'path of *preparation*'.

### **3. Mahayana path of seeing**

The criterion for entering the Mahayana path of seeing is the cultivation of a meditative stabilization that is a union of calm abiding and special insight, and that realizes emptiness *directly*. This meditative stabilization is a meditative equipoise. To such an awareness (as it directly realizes the ultimate nature of all phenomena) all appearances of subject and object become inseparable, like water being poured into water.

